

Civil Works Project Development Process

The Army Corps of Engineers, through its Civil Works program, develops, protects, restores and enhances our nation's water and related land resources for commercial navigation, flood damage reduction, shoreline protection and the environment. Our projects are planned through a disciplined and rigorous process spelled out in the Economic Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies issued by the President's Water Resources Council in 1983. The Principles and Guidelines mandate a process that contributes both to national economic development (i.e., not just regional or local development) and ecosystem restoration. Protection and restoration of the environment is the fastest growing part of the Civil Works program, currently constituting over 15 percent of the program.

The water resources program of the Corps has increasingly become a partnership with state and local governments and non-governmental organizations. The Water Resources Development Act of 1986 (WRDA 86) emphasized the expectation that project partners become more involved in the development and financing of solutions to water resources problems with the idea that national needs could best be met through projects planned and developed at the local level. The Corps has embraced the partnership principles of WRDA 86 and extended them beyond state and local governments to the full spectrum of interests, both environmental and economic. Our goal is to solve water resource problems through an open, transparent, collaborative and, to the extent possible, consensus-based process. We hope to duplicate successes like the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan that address a wide range of critical national economic and environmental needs and enjoy wide support from the full spectrum of water resources interests.

The other hallmark of the Corps Civil Works planning process is the degree of scrutiny that projects undergo. There are comprehensive procedures for both independent technical and policy review by those who have not been involved in the project's planning and design. The entire Corps project development process is subject to a higher level of Executive Branch and Congressional oversight than almost any other Federal activity. Corps projects are separately authorized in a bill passed by Congress and signed into law by the President. Even Corps studies must be authorized by Congressional action. Both the Administration and the Congress, through the appropriations process, review every project annually. Each project is also subject to a benefit-cost analysis unique among Federal agencies. Recently, the Chief of Engineers re-instituted the Environmental Advisory Board - a group of independent experts to review selected projects and provide input to the Corps process in the interest of a more environmentally sustainable program. Only about 16 out of 100 studies of water resource problems the Corps undertakes result in projects.

The project development process has evolved over the 200-year history of the Corps to meet changing National needs and values. Our objective is to continue to be open to change and innovation to better serve then Nation.

For more information on the project development process, visit
http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/cecwp/cecwp_temp/6index.htm